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SUBJECT: IRAN: EU-3 LETTER WARNS TEHRAN AGAINST CHANGES TO VOLUNTARY SUSPENSION

Classified By: CDA: Alejandro D. Wolff for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

1. (S) SUMMARY: MFA Political Director Laboulaye discussed with Charge May 11 the EU-3 letter to Rohani warning against resumption of uranium conversion. Laboulaye said that it may be necessary to convene an extraordinary meeting of the IAEA board and stressed the need to build international consensus, particularly with Russia and China, in dealing with the Iranian threat. END SUMMARY.

2. (S) In a May 11 meeting with Charge, MFA Political Director Stanislas de Laboulaye shared the letter from EU-3 Foreign Ministers and High Representative Solana to Iranian Supreme National Security Council Secretary Hassan Rohani (text in para 9). Laboulaye said that the letter had been delivered in Tehran May 11. Laboulaye added that EU-3 Ambassadors had met with El Baradei in Vienna who had generally approved of the letter, but had been critical of the threatening tone, saying that it should have offered some carrots. Laboulaye said that the Iranians had missed an opportunity to take advantage of EU-3 offers for cooperation, e.g. on civilian nuclear programs, but had chosen instead to block such offers. He said "we have proof" that Iranian enrichment had nothing to do with civilian programs.

3. (S) Laboulaye said that El Baradei had been useful during the NPT conference in New York, meeting with the Iranians on the margins. Other countries, with the notable exception of Venezuela, had also ensured that the Iranians knew that international pressure was strong. Laboulaye continued that Russia had been helpful, sharing the view of the danger posed by Iranian nuclear programs. He said that Deputy Foreign Minister Kislyak was intending to travel to Tehran to urge the Iranians not to do anything "stupid." Laboulaye noted, however that Moscow saw Iran as their client, and preferred not to have the EU-3 at the center of Iran's foreign policy. The Russians, he said, constantly wanted to know what the EU-3 was saying to Tehran.

4. (S) Laboulaye expected that the Iranians would send a letter to the IAEA, possibly inviting representatives to visit Tehran or Isfahan to witness the breaking of the seals. Laboulaye was unsure whether Iran intended to resume conversion immediately, but noted this could happen as early as May 14 which would create a difficult moment. Laboulaye said that if conversion did not resume immediately, the strategy should be to work with El Baradei to gain time. The EU-3, he said, was pressing for a meeting with Rohani in two weeks, probably in Brussels on May 23, and hoped that Iran would not take action before then.

5. (S) Laboulaye said that the EU-3 would seek an extraordinary meeting of the IAEA Board of Governors, either when the Iranians sent their letter or when the seals were broken. The purpose of that meeting, he said, would be to tell the Iranians to get back in compliance with the November 2004 Paris agreement "or else." Laboulaye acknowledged that it was the "or else" which would be difficult to draft. The next step, would be a second meeting of the IAEA, currently scheduled for June 13 (just prior to the June 17 Iranian election) which would take the decision to refer the matter to the UNSC.

6. (S) Laboulaye stressed that for the process to work through the UNSC, it would be essential to develop an international consensus, something which was only possible if it could be shown that the EU-3 had been straightforward and strong, and had tried everything reasonable to prevent Iran's resumption of enrichment-related activities. He said that there were two weeks to build such a consensus and that it was particularly important to get Russia on board, as Russia's position was central to the Chinese position.

7. (S) Laboulaye speculated that Tehran might not go beyond conversion activities, which in itself was a "gray area." Elaborating, he said that conversion had not been covered in the 2003 IAEA definition of enrichment activity, and it was only after the EU-3/Iran meetings in Brussels and Paris in February and November 2004 that the EU-3 had succeeded in enlarging the definition to include conversion. However, he cautioned, some could consider that conversion did not amount to enrichment, and the Iranians were fully aware of this gray area. It was for this reason, Laboulaye said, that the EU-3 letter referred to the Paris agreement.

18. (S) Laboulaye said that the EU-3 had not decided whether an Iranian letter of intent, or the actual breaking of the seals would be the trigger for the exceptional IAEA meeting. The GoF would need to weigh the pros and cons. Expressing a personal view, Laboulaye said that waiting for the seals to be lifted would probably be too late, but there would have to be consensus among the international community in Vienna.

19. (S) TEXT OF EU3 LETTER TO ROHANI (PROVIDED TO CHARGE BY LABOULAYE)

Following the recent discussions between our negotiating teams in London, and contacts in New York, we are writing to underline the importance the governments of France, Germany and the United Kingdom, with the support of the High Representative of the European Union, attach to continuing negotiations within the framework agreed to in Paris in November 2004.

We welcome Iran's continued voluntary suspension of all enrichment-related and reprocessing activities, and emphasize that sustaining that suspension, while negotiations on a long-term agreement are under way, is essential for the continuation of the overall process agreed in Paris, and necessary to respect the IAEA Board resolution of 28 November 2004.

We recall that since our common declaration issued in Tehran on 21 October 2003, the Europeans have kept the question of the Iranian program in the IAEA.

In the light of this, we were concerned by the statements made by a number of senior Iranian officials suggesting that some activities covered by the voluntary suspension might soon be re-started. Iran should be in no doubt that any such change to the suspension would be a clear breach of the Paris Agreement and of the IAEA resolutions. It would bring the negotiating process to an end. The consequences beyond could only be negative for Iran.

We do not believe that Iran needs to take such a step. Though we understand and share your desire for progress and the earliest possible resolution, these hopes need to be placed in the context of the complexity of the issues in question. Given the starting positions of the two sides, they will inevitably take time to complete.

The dialogue has already brought benefits. This is progress that we should build on. We believe that we can use the negotiations not only to resolve the nuclear issue, but also to improve the future relationship between Iran and Europe. To this end our strong preference would be to continue discussions in good faith to find mutually acceptable objective guarantees on the nuclear question, and to provide firm guarantees on nuclear, technological and economic cooperation and firm commitments on security issues. In particular, we are ready for further discussions in the field of nuclear supply for Iran's power generation program. We are also ready to discuss further a political and security frame work.

More broadly, the EU's negotiations with Iran on a Trade and Cooperation Agreement and a Political Dialogue Agreement continue and we hope that we will make further progress at the next round of discussions in Brussels on 17 May. We are also looking forward to giving continuing European support to Iran's entry into the world Trade Organization. This sort of progress will be jeopardized if Iran now moves away from the Paris Agreement.

In order to pursue our discussions, it may be useful if we were to meet you in the next fortnight. We suggest that until then no steps are taken that could undermine the process. END TEXT.

WOLFF